United Nations A/C.3/63/SR.37

General Assembly
Sixty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 January 2009

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 37th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 November 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Peralta (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Paraguay)

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In the absence of Mr. Majoor, Netherlands, Mr. Peralta (Paraguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (*continued*) (A/63/12 and Add.1, and A/63/321)

1. **Mr. Jung** Jin-ho (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation had highly valued the discussions and conclusions of the fifty-ninth session of the Executive Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which had taken place in October 2008. His country welcomed the adoption of the General Conclusion on International Protection, which emphasized durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. The recent rise in mixed migration called for innovative approaches. The enhanced cooperation between Member States and international agencies, such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), was an encouraging sign.

2. His country strongly supported UNHCR reform, including the streamlining of its Headquarters and the outposting of certain functions to Budapest, which would reduce administrative costs. Decentralization and regionalization would bring decision-making closer to the field. Result-based management was also progressing well: Focus software had been introduced, and the Global Needs Assessments Initiative had been launched. However, reform was not an end in itself; he hoped that UNHCR would keep Member States informed of developments on the ground.

3. His delegation was concerned at repeated reports that countries were forcibly returning refugees on security grounds. Protection of refugees was a non-political act, and the principle of non-refoulement should be upheld by all States. The widespread recharacterization of asylum seekers and refugees and the proliferation of labels referring to them were also worrying and ran the risk of narrowing the concept of refugees. At the domestic level, the Republic of Korea was amending the Immigration Control Act in order to improve its asylum system and treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

4. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen) said that his country had been among the first to ratify the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Yemen had implemented the provisions of those instruments in accordance with its Islamic and Arab principles. Since the early 1990s, it had received tens of thousands of refugees from the Horn of Africa, in particular from Somalia. The figures provided by UNHCR showed that human trafficking across the Gulf of Aden had tripled between August 2007 and August 2008. Despite the modest means at its disposal, Yemen granted such migrants their full rights to movement, work and health care. In so doing, it was cooperating with the relevant international agencies. Yemen was also addressing the root causes by seeking to promote reconciliation in the conflict in Somalia. It had hosted a number of relevant meetings, most recently the Regional Conference of 19 and 20 May 2008.

5. As a result of such migration, Yemen faced a significant cost in economic, social, health and security terms. It welcomed the efforts of UNHCR and looked forward to cooperating with it in future. Efforts to reform it and increase the means at its disposal were therefore welcome. It was important to seek a solution to the conflict in Somalia. Lastly, in view of the scale of the issue, Yemen urged donors to increase their support for host States.

6. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) said that his country was significantly affected by illegal migration and human trafficking in the Mediterranean. The precarious vessels used by such migrants led to frequent loss of life. Human trafficking in the region was detrimental to genuine refugees and persons qualifying for humanitarian status under international law. The number of migrants received by Malta had increased by almost 50 per cent over the previous year. During that time, Malta had received the highest per capita number of asylum applicants in Europe and also had the highest acceptance rate. Malta was a member State of the European Union, a party to the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and a member of the International Organization for Migration. It was fully committed to fulfilling its obligations towards refugees.

7. However, Malta was a small island State with a high population density and limited absorption capacity, and its burden was acutely disproportionate to its size. The country was further constrained by a lack of human and financial resources, which limited not only its security capability, but also the social and administrative facilities available. In accordance with

the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility, Malta had repeatedly requested assistance from the European Union, other States and UNHCR. It welcomed the recent adoption of the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, which would help develop a holistic approach to the issue. The Pact provided for beneficiaries of international protection to be relocated within the European Union. Towards that end, Malta looked forward to working closely with countries of origin and transit.

8. **Mr. Chabar** (Morocco) said that political conflict, climate change and food insecurity made it increasingly difficult to deliver humanitarian aid. Nevertheless, it was morally unacceptable for the mission of UNHCR to be hampered by any political, ideological or other considerations. Capacity-building had been significantly improved; but UNHCR's direct presence on the ground remained crucial, and could not be sidelined. However, the Office's activities, which were by nature humanitarian and social, were perceived by certain States as having political implications. Morocco therefore continued to call for civilian populations to be separated from armed elements, something that was essential if UNHCR was to preserve its fundamental guiding principles.

9. Unfortunately, UNHCR was often prevented from estimating the size of refugee populations, something that was essential for its work. Host countries had a specific responsibility to allow them to do so. Any shortcoming in that connection should be condemned by humanitarian agencies. Whether in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Iraq or elsewhere, the voluntary repatriation of refugees should not be hindered. With the support of the international community, UNHCR should therefore take action to assess the needs of the populations under its remit. Morocco would stand by it in order to ensure that its work could take place without hindrance.

10. **Mr. Kapambwe** (Zambia) said that his delegation was concerned that the numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide were increasing for the second consecutive year. Progress in achieving sustainable solutions in Africa and the continued decrease in the number of refugees there since 2001 were welcome. However, in 2007, Africa's 12.7 million internally displaced persons had represented half of the world's total. It was hoped that African initiatives, including a draft convention on the protection of internally displaced persons and preparations for the African Union Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, to be held in Uganda in early 2009, would place internally displaced persons on the same footing as refugees in terms of protection provided. The convention would be the first regional treaty on internally displaced persons.

11. Zambia had been hosting refugees for over four decades, and currently some 87,000 refugees were there, mainly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with smaller numbers from Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia. Because of the relative stability of the region, Zambia had concentrated on voluntary repatriation. It was expected that repatriation of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo would be completed in 2009 or 2010.

12. While repatriation efforts for Angola had been officially completed in 2007, 27,000 of the 175,000 refugees who had been repatriated had returned to Zambia since then, raising concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of reintegration efforts in the country of origin. Another solution was local integration. Zambia had been engaged in an initiative to develop infrastructure and agriculture in various parts of the country to help refugees achieve self-sufficiency.

13. Increasing global challenges were stretching the capacities of humanitarian organizations to respond. The inability of the World Food Programme to continue its feeding programme for vulnerable refugees, including the disabled, the aged and the chronically ill, mainly from Angola, was of great concern and could lead to a looming food crisis if the necessary funds could not be mobilized. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) must not allow the situation to deteriorate. The need for innovative resource mobilization methods was critical, and the Global Needs Assessment Initiative, focusing on eight pilot countries including Zambia and based on refugees' actual needs rather than on available resources, was welcome. The international community must step up its assistance for humanitarian relief as well as for long-term development needs.

14. **Mr. Kruljević** (Serbia) said that UNHCR had recently included Serbia on a list of five countries with a protracted refugee situation. There were 98,000 registered refugees in Serbia, but the actual number was closer to 300,000. If internally displaced persons

were included, the number stood at half a million, or more than 5 per cent of the country's total population. Many refugee centres had been closed, but some 8,000 people still lived in them, some of whom had been there for more than 15 years. More than 40,000 internally displaced members of the Roma community were living in temporary settlements in extremely difficult conditions.

15. Serbia had done much to provide assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons. The two main solutions were repatriation and local integration. The former was, of course, the optimum solution. Pursuant to the Sarajevo Declaration, returnees should be able to realize the rights to occupancy/tenancy, property, labour or a pension in their country of origin. Most, but not all, signatory States, had met their obligations in that regard.

16. In regard to the return of internally displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija, discouragingly little progress had been made since the arrival of the United Nations presence. The international presence had the obligation to implement Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) fully, particularly with respect to their safe and sustainable return home, but it had yet to do so. Further international assistance was also indispensable for the local integration of refugees within Serbia. Notwithstanding its economic difficulties, his country had provided assistance to those very vulnerable groups of its population and would continue to work with UNHCR in that regard.

17. **Mr. Emadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country had hosted nearly 3 million Afghan refugees over the course of three decades, granting them residence permits and welfare, health, educational and other services equal to those provided to Iranian nationals. Meeting the needs of the refugee population had made his country's already complex socio-economic situation even more difficult. Iraqi refugees had also been received in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

18. From 2002 until 2006, voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees had been carried out in cooperation with the Government of Afghanistan and the UNHCR. Support for the Afghan refugees had also included the provision of thousands of scholarships to Afghan university students, support for reconstruction and infrastructure projects and enhanced investments in Afghanistan and Iraq. Assistance from the international community was needed. It did not make sense for one country to receive nearly 10 per cent of the world's refugees while other countries felt no responsibility to shoulder the burden.

19. **Ms. Mah** (Thailand) said that her country had the largest UNHCR resettlement programme in Asia. There were 130,000 displaced persons there as well as 3 million illegal migrants. While resettlement was a durable solution, efforts should also focus on prevention measures and finding solutions to the root causes which gave rise to refugee and displaced populations. There should be support to efforts to promote political, economic and social conditions conducive to return, such as development and income-generating projects.

20. Thailand had worked hard to create a positive environment for displaced persons in temporary shelter areas by supplementing education activities, vocational training, sports, recreation and language programmes and holding discussions with private sector partners on income-generating opportunities. The largest share of the burden of displacement continued to be shouldered by developing countries and even least developed countries. The international community must step up its efforts to assist developing countries to overcome such challenges, particularly in the current difficult economic climate.

21. **Mr. Tarar** (Pakistan) said that the alarming rise in the number of displaced persons and refugees required a coordinated response from the international community. That response must be based on the principles of transparency and impartiality and take into account the effects on host countries of the protracted presence of refugees. UNHCR should provide host countries with more assistance in coping with refugee populations, and more attention should likewise be paid to rehabilitation of damaged ecosystems and infrastructure. The food crisis had made it more difficult for host countries to meet the needs of their refugee populations; new international initiatives were needed to combat malnutrition and disease among refugees, particularly women and children.

22. Pakistan continued to host the largest refugee population in the world. In February 2007, in cooperation with UNHCR, his Government had undertaken the first ever campaign to register those refugees; more than two million Afghan refugees had been registered. While he supported the principle of the

voluntary return of refugees, he underscored the importance of creating the necessary conditions to encourage refugees to return. Viable individual and family return packages could, for example, be offered. The sustainable reintegration of Afghan refugees into their own society would likewise contribute immensely to regional stability.

23. Until such time as all Afghan refugees returned to their country, the international community must continue its support for them. That support had, however, declined considerably since 2002 and must be increased. The international community had a responsibility to provide the necessary protection to refugees without creating new political, economic and social tensions and issues. His delegation remained committed to meeting the needs of refugees and to ensuring their repatriation with dignity and honour to their home countries.

24. **Mr. Iddi** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the growing number of refugees and displaced persons caused by conflict situations as well as by deprivation, environmental degradation and climate change posed ever greater challenges. More must be done to meet those challenges, including by strengthening conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts and ensuring that UNHCR had safe and unhindered access to refugees and displaced persons.

25. At the national level, his Government had developed, assisted by UNHCR and the donor community, a comprehensive sustainable strategy to address the refugee problem based on voluntary repatriation as well as naturalization and local integration. While the international community had been very supportive of that approach, there remained a nearly $11 million shortfall in the $34 million pledged under the supplementary appeal made by UNHCR in that regard. He hoped donors would fund that shortfall as well as the complex process of elimination of refugee settlements and integration of their residents into the local community.

26. His Government supported the efforts of the international community and UNHCR in meeting the needs of the Burundian refugees since 1972 and welcomed the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which had created an enabling environment for the voluntary return of those refugees. Accordingly, his country would close one of the two remaining camps housing those refugees in its north-western region but was also undertaking the huge task of naturalizing more than 200,000 Burundian refugees, or 80 per cent of the total. The remaining 20 per cent had opted to return to Burundi; and half had already done so. More State land, however, must be made available to returning refugees in Burundi in order to promote reintegration and make the repatriation process sustainable.

27. **Mr. Frommelt** (Liechtenstein) said that the global financial, energy and food crises, which would particularly affect the developing countries, coupled with the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, would have serious consequences for refugees and displaced persons, who already generally lived in appalling situations. Higher priority should be given to meeting the needs of refugees and displaced persons, in particular with a view to finding long-term solutions. While voluntary repatriation remained the ideal solution, in situations where that was not possible other options including, for example, regional approaches must be explored. His Government was working with UNHCR to find durable solutions for the resettlement of asylum-seekers. It had long supported the activities of UNHCR both financially and through secondment of personnel and would continue to do so.

28. He commended UNHCR for its commitment to the implementation of the Agenda for Protection and the holding of an annual Dialogue on Protection Challenges in Geneva and looked forward to the adoption by the Office's Executive Committee of a General Conclusion on international protection. In that regard he stressed the importance of the principle of non-refoulement. The applicability of that principle under international law had been discussed at the joint Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Expert Workshop on Human Rights and International Cooperation in Counter-Terrorism held in Liechtenstein in November 2006. Participants had underscored that the principle of non-refoulement was recognized implicitly or explicitly in a number of international human rights instruments, was an accepted tenet of customary international law, in particular with regard to Sates that were not parties to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and was considered to be absolute.

29. Liechtenstein supported the efforts of UNHCR to streamline its Geneva office while strengthening field

operations and to decentralize and regionalize its operations, especially in the light of its modest resources. Its reliance on mostly voluntary contributions made planning difficult. Broadened partnerships and strengthened bilateral and multilateral cooperation would therefore be essential. UNHCR was already a well-managed agency, and he welcomed measures adopted to ensure its continued efficiency and effectiveness in the future.

30. **Mr. Muita** (Kenya) expressed alarm at the increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons in Africa and said that African Governments and regional and subregional organizations must take decisive action to address the root causes of conflicts that led to the uprooting of populations. Peacebuilding and conflict resolution must likewise be incorporated into humanitarian strategies, and donors should increase their post-conflict and development aid in Africa. In that context he welcomed the initiatives by African States in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions and Kenya, which should be supported by the international community. He pledged his Government's support for the search for peace in Somalia, implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Southern Sudan and willingness to participate in peacekeeping activities.

31. As a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, his Government granted access to asylum-seekers and provided assistance to refugees. It supported the efforts of the African Union to conclude a convention for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons. Pursuant to the Refugees Act 2006, which had created the Commission for Refugee Affairs, his Government had taken a more active role in refugee management, in particular with regard to registration and determination of their status, and collaborated closely with UNHCR in that regard.

32. More than 250,000 refugees from neighbouring countries were currently in Kenya. The situation in Somalia in particular posed a grave danger to peace and security in his country due to arms smuggling and the threat of terrorism. The violence that had followed the Kenyan elections in December 2007, in which more than 1,000 people had been killed, had caused the displacement of over 300,000 people. The recent power-sharing agreement had facilitated the voluntary return of most of those persons. He thanked the Organization for its support during the post-election period and acknowledged the moral and material support provided by numerous Member States.

33. Voluntary repatriation, local integration and third country resettlement remained the most desirable and durable solutions for refugees. He therefore welcomed the consolidation of peace and security in 2007 in such countries as Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia, which had facilitated the return of more than 300,000 refugees, as well as the naturalization of more than 200,000 Burundian refugees by the United Republic of Tanzania. His Government was heavily engaged in peace efforts, in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions in particular, that had allowed for the return of tens of thousands of displaced persons. It would continue to support the international community's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance whenever necessary and would not renege on its responsibility to protect refugees.

34. **Ms. Abdelhak** (Algeria) said that Algeria had hosted refugees from Western Sahara for three decades. Her Government welcomed the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and his staff in protecting the refugees living in camps in Tindouf while they awaited a just and durable solution to the conflict in Western Sahara. Thanks to the efforts of UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Algeria had signed a letter of understanding that had made it possible to mitigate the precarious living conditions of the Saharawi refugees.

35. Her delegation hoped that the 18-month agreement between WFP and the Algerian Government could be extended so as to ensure that food aid could continue to be provided to the refugee population, which included children under five, pregnant and nursing women and schoolchildren. Saharawi women had played a key role in organizing the distribution of food aid in the camps. Her delegation also welcomed the efforts by UNHCR to help refugees in Tindouf renew their ties with their families living in Western Sahara.

36. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that his Government was doing its utmost, within its modest resources, to host the refugees living in Bangladesh. The support of UNHCR had proved immensely useful in that regard.

The Office's activities and programmes in Bangladesh had significantly ameliorated the situation of refugees, particularly with regard to the mandate to identify, prevent and reduce statelessness and to pursue the Delivering as One principle.

37. It was hoped that the second Dialogue on Protection Challenges would contribute to resolving the protracted refugee situation in Bangladesh. His country and UNHCR had agreed to reactivate the tripartite mechanism with Myanmar to complete the voluntary repatriation of the remaining 27,000 Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar. The issuance of new identity cards by UNHCR to refugees, which were recognized as valid identity documents by his Government, was bringing some noticeable protection benefits, particularly to refugee women.

38. It was heartening to note that UNHCR was striving to focus its operations and devote more resources to the field. The refugee population worldwide would benefit from the ongoing decentralization and regionalization of the Office's work, as well as its undertaking of human resources, structural and management reforms. UNHCR should play a larger role in complementing the ongoing peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations of the United Nations. His Government shared the concern expressed by the High Commissioner with regard to the budgetary constraints faced by UNHCR. The Office should be adequately prepared to address the growing scale and complexity of forced displacement, with special emphasis on the adverse effects of climate change.

39. **Ms. Nadjaf** (Afghanistan) said that three decades of devastating conflict in her country had forced millions of Afghans to go into exile. Her Government was grateful to the countries that had hosted Afghan refugees, especially its neighbours Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Afghanistan's main objective in 2008 and 2009 was to improve conditions for voluntary repatriation as well as the reintegration of returnees, in conformity with the objectives of her Government's National Development Strategy and the tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation signed with UNHCR and the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Accordingly, her delegation called for sustained international assistance for the creation of a suitable environment for the return and reintegration of Afghan refugees.

40. Afghanistan welcomed the temporary suspension of the UNHCR voluntary repatriation operation from Pakistan to Afghanistan during the annual winter break, in view of the difficulties that it could create for the reintegration of Afghan refugees. Her Government was concerned about the insecurity in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan and the influx of refugees from those areas into Afghanistan, which could worsen the humanitarian crisis in her country. Many returnees were facing reintegration difficulties, including lack of land, shelter, water and basic services such as health care and education.

41. The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation of Afghanistan was monitoring the situation to ensure that returns were voluntary, dignified and gradual. It was focusing on the provision of key physical, legal and material necessities linked to the reintegration process. In partnership with UNHCR, the Ministry was providing reintegration programmes, particularly in the sectors of shelter, water and income generation.

42. Insecurity was the main obstacle to the return of Afghan refugees and their effective and sustainable reintegration. The deterioration of the security situation in the south of Afghanistan caused by the terrorist activities of the Taliban and Al-Qaida had created difficult conditions for returnees and restricted the scope of humanitarian assistance. The global rise in food prices, the current drought and the approaching winter had resulted in high dependence on humanitarian assistance. Despite the joint appeal issued by Afghanistan and the United Nations for additional financial mobilization in response to the impending crisis, only 32 per cent of the identified need had been met.

43. It was estimated that some 540,000 Afghan refugees would return home in the next two years. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and UNHCR would co-host an international conference on return and reintegration on 19 November in Kabul. The conference would address how best to ensure the sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and seek to reconcile the repatriation targets and timelines proposed by neighbouring countries with the increasingly challenging operational environment in Afghanistan. It would also be a forum to mobilize additional resources for a comprehensive, integrated approach and for multi-year funding delivered through the framework of the National

Development Strategy. She invited Member States to participate in the conference.

44. She would like to express the gratitude of her Government to the international community and United Nations agencies for their support in addressing the plight of Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons. No sign of confidence in the country's future would be more compelling than the return of its citizens to participate in the upcoming presidential election. Afghan refugees would not hesitate to return home if Afghanistan managed to ensure peace, security, prosperity and justice. Her Government remained committed to working with the international community to fulfil its commitments made during the recent donor conference in Paris to ensure conditions for the voluntary and sustainable return of Afghans to their homeland.

45. **Mr. Vigny** (Switzerland) said that the primary responsibility for the protection of refugees lay with States. Switzerland continued to call for the ratification by the largest possible number of States of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto. His Government welcomed the efforts of UNHCR to devise ways and means to strengthen the reception and protection capacity of countries confronted with large refugee flows. Switzerland had developed a regional protection concept, the main purpose of which was to contribute to more rapid and effective protection of refugees in their region of origin.

46. His delegation commended UNHCR for the work accomplished during 2008 in connection with negotiations for the adoption of a General Conclusion on international protection. Switzerland attached great importance to the Executive Committee's conclusions, the primary function of which was to fill certain gaps in the area of protection, and wished to see future consultations in that regard.

47. Internally displaced persons had specific and increasing needs for protection. The chairmanship of the protection cluster gave UNHCR a leading role in the implementation of the collaborative cluster approach. Concerning protection and assistance on behalf of civilian populations in the event of non-international armed conflict, his delegation recalled the specific mandate granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and in that regard called upon UNHCR and ICRC to pursue a clear and constructive dialogue in Geneva as well as in the countries of operation.

48. He commended the efforts of UNHCR to face the challenges on the ground in the implementation of the cluster approach. Given the increasing work of UNHCR in protecting internally displaced persons, special emphasis should be placed on training measures to improve the Office's operational and management capacities.

49. Since 2007, the number of refugees throughout the world had increased, particularly in urban areas. New and appropriate responses were needed in terms of identification, registration and delivery modalities and protection. Switzerland wished to assure UNHCR of its support in facing those challenges and awaited with interest a general policy statement concerning urban refugees. One of the new challenges that would inevitably affect the international community was the potential impact of climate change on population movements. Switzerland was determined to include that issue in its political priorities, particularly those relating to its humanitarian and development activities.

50. **Mr. Buff** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that displacement was often the result of violations of international humanitarian law, including deliberate attacks on civilians. It inflicted immense suffering and hardship on the families caught up in hostilities. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) needed urgent assistance because they were unable to rely on their usual support mechanisms. However, assistance also needed to be provided to those who had not been able to flee conflicts and had remained in their homes. Displacement required diverse and innovative solutions because it took many forms and could involve individuals or whole communities.

51. ICRC had a legal mandate from the international community to protect IDPs and provide them with assistance when they were victims of armed conflicts. However, it also welcomed the increase in the number and diversity of humanitarian actors protecting and assisting IDPs. Two main challenges faced those actors: first, the need to understand the increasingly diverse and complex environments; and secondly, the need to deliver a response that effectively addressed the needs of the affected populations.

52. There was a long tradition of cooperation between ICRC and the United Nations system,

especially UNHCR. In addition, ICRC was responsible for overseeing and coordinating the international relief operations of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which together had provided assistance to 4.1 million displaced persons and returnees in 2007. In addition to drafting a policy on internal displacement for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, ICRC had developed strategies aimed at coordinating its response with the responses of other actors to situations of internal displacement.

53. **Mr. Dall'Oglio** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that traditional notions of "voluntary" and "forced" migration must be seen in the context of mobility resulting from a broader range of interlinked economic, political and environmental factors. The main challenge facing the international community was how to successfully and humanely manage migration while ensuring international protection for refugees.

54. IOM had continued to develop its cooperation with the United Nations system in 2008. For example, in the Gulf of Eden, UNHCR and IOM had jointly established the Mixed Migration Task Force with the active participation of the United Nations system and key non-governmental organizations. Building on the lessons learned from that first regional meeting, IOM and UNHCR were planning the next regional migration regional workshop, to be held in Dakar in November 2008, and would be increasing their cooperation in the field.

55. IOM and UNHCR had also developed their cooperation at the central and field levels in providing assistance to IDPs and had developed an effective joint approach whereby IOM performed the role of global cluster lead for camp coordination and management in IDP situations resulting from natural disasters, and UNHCR took the lead in situations of conflict-induced displacement. In the light of its research on the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation and population movements, IOM had offered to host a number of workshops among the concerned humanitarian agencies to consider terminology, typologies and operational gaps. Finally, it was important not to lose sight of the sixty years that IOM and UNHCR had worked together productively and successfully on third country resettlement and voluntary repatriation. IOM remained committed to ensure that it had the capacity to assist refugees and at the same time to explore new ways of addressing changing demands.

56. **Mr. Schulz** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that following the 30th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in November 2007, IFRC had undertaken to develop a global policy on migration for its national societies that would enhance their provision of assistance and protection to migrants, including asylum-seekers and refugees. National societies made a vital contribution to UNHCR through their assessment of the needs of migrants at the local level. The global network of volunteers and national societies had reported that the global economic crisis had affected not only migrants in the host countries but also the family members of those migrants in their countries of origin who depended on remittances. They had also reported that women migrants had been hardest hit by the global crisis.

57. The national societies also had an important humanitarian role to play in assisting all migrants, irrespective of their legal status. Notwithstanding, IFRC agreed with the High Commissioner's concern about the increasing difficulties for asylum-seekers to claim asylum, especially when they were part of mixed population movements. Complementarity and partnership were essential tools for targeting the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants because of cross-cutting protection issues. For example, xenophobia often put foreigners at risk of discriminatory administrative practices, exploitation in the labour market, human trafficking and other abuses. IFRC therefore welcomed the efforts by the United Nations since 2005 to strengthen structures and assign responsibilities for clusters of humanitarian action, including for protection.

58. **Mr. Ould Hadrami** (Mauritania) said that his Government was working with UNHCR to meet the requirements of the international agreements to which it was party and to incorporate them into its national legislation. It aimed to improve the assistance that it provided to refugees, increase cooperation between Government authorities and UNHCR, and enhance civil society participation. Mauritania had decided to assist the return of refugees from Senegal and Mali, and that process was continuing with the assistance of UNHCR. To that end, it had signed an agreement for

the return of refugees from Senegal and had established procedures to allow them to return with dignity.

59. **Ms. Blic** (France), speaking in exercise of the right of reply with respect to the statement made by the representative of the Sudan at the previous meeting, said that her Government expected a radical and immediate change in the policies of the Government of the Sudan concerning Darfur. First, the Sudan must cooperate with the International Court of Justice and implement the decisions taken concerning Ahmad Harun and Ali Kushayb. It must also take all necessary steps to resolve the crisis in Darfur, including by facilitating a cessation of the hostilities, allowing access by humanitarian workers to civilians, facilitating the deployment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, stepping up efforts to find a political solution and re-establishing normal relations with Chad. France still hoped that Abdulwahid el Nour would take part in the peace negotiations and supported unconditionally the work of Djibril Yipènè Bassolé in finding a political solution to the crisis in Darfur.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.